GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1619
ANSWERED ON:28.11.2002
OPERATION LEECH
DINESH CHANDRA YADAV;PUTTASWAMY GOWDA;RAM JEEVAN SINGH;V. VETRISELVAN

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a joint services operation `Leech` has been conducted by the Government to intercept gun running in the Andamans meant for the North-East terrorists;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the achievements made since the launching of the operation `Leech`;

(d) whether the CBI has raised doubts about the bonafides of the entire operation;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the reaction of the Government with regard thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES)

(a) to (f): A combined service operation (Operation Leech) was undertaken in February 1998 to intercept arms deliveries meant for Indian insurgent groups in the North East.In this operation, 73 foreign nationals were apprehended and 138 weapons along with a large quantity of ammunitions were recovered.

On the basis of certain information and in view of the possible international ramifications of this operation, it was considered desirable that investigations into this episode be carried out by a Central Investigating Agency. Accordingly CBI was directed to take over the investigation. The investigation is still on.

However, as no evidence could come forth during the investigation against 37 fishermen, a report under Section 169 CrPC was filed by the CBI and the fishermen were discharged by the CJM on 07.05.1999.The remaining 36 militants who were lodged in jail in Port Blair were released from judicial custody on 14.10.1999. They are at present lodged in a building in Port Blair as they do not have any travel documents.

The investigation by the CBI is continuing.